

May 18, 2010

Good morning Representative Corriveau and members of the House Health Policy Committee and thank you for bringing Representative Knollenberg's resolution before the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of HR 104 to memorialize the US Congress to enact H.R. 1646, the Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Act.

Hearing loss is a health condition and disability that affects 36 million American adults, which translates to about 1 in 10 citizens. After age 65, that number rises to 1 in 3 Americans who have hearing loss. In the US, 3 out of 1000 babies are born with hearing loss. As you can see, this a very significant portion of our citizenry.

People with hearing loss experience a lowered quality of life due to physical and emotional symptoms associated with this disability. Although almost 95% of Hard of Hearing people can benefit from using hearing aids, only 22% actually use them. The primary reason cited by consumers is lack of affordability (MarkeTrak VIII survey - 2009).

Allow me to tell you about Jonathan (not his real name) a little boy whose family is unable to afford to purchase a new set of hearing aids for him. Consequently, Jonathan is using technology that is no longer appropriate for his degree of hearing loss. This puts him at a disadvantage in every single aspect of his life. The Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit would provide much needed financial relief to families like Jonathan's and, more importantly, it signals our commitment to providing a good quality of life to our children, who are our future.

In another example, during my volunteer activities I often encounter Seniors who have had to make the financial choice to either go without obtaining much needed hearing aids or who have chosen to continue to use old, unreliable hearing aid technology due to costs. It is heartbreaking to witness the anxiety and frustration of this population as they are forced to withdraw from activities and interactions which maintain a meaningful connection to the world around them. This tax credit would significantly improve their quality of life.

H.R. 1646 has gained bi-partisan support in the US Congress and the US Senate. I urge you to unanimously support Representative Knollenberg's resolution, HR 104, on behalf of Michigan's 1.4 million citizens who have hearing loss.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee today. I wish to express my gratitude to Representative Corriveau for arranging to provide CART (Computer Assisted Realtime Translation) during today's proceedings.